

33 **S** LADY WINDERMERE'S
FAN" [Acr IV

none, or thirty at the most. Twenty-nine when
there ^{are} *pink* shades, thirty when there are not. So you
^{see} what difficulties it would involve. No, as far as I am
concerned, let your wife cherish the memory of this dead,
stainless mother. Why should I interfere with her
illusions? I ^{find} it hard enough to keep my own. I lost one
illusion last night. I thought I had no heart. I find I
have, ^{and} a heart doesn't suit me, Windermere. Somehow it
doesn't ^{go} with modern dress. It makes one look old. [*Takes
up mirror from table and looks into #.*] And it spoils
one's career
at critical moments.

Lord Windermere. You fill me with horror—with
absolute horror.

Mrs. Erlynne. [*Rising.*] I suppose, Windermere,
you ^{would} like me to retire into a convent, or become a
hospital nurse, or something of that kind, as people do in
silly modern novels. That is stupid of you, Arthur; in real
life ^{we} don't do such things—not as long as we have any
good looks left, at any rate. No—what consoles one
nowadays ^{is} not repentance, but pleasure. Repentance is quite
out of date. And besides, if a woman really repents, she
has ^{to} go ^{to} a bad dressmaker, otherwise no one believes in
her. And nothing in the world would induce me to do
that. No; I am going to pass entirely out of your two lives.
My coming into them has been a mistake—I discovered
that last night.

Lord Windermere. A fatal mistake.

Mrs. Erlynne. [*Smiling*] Almost fatal.

Lord Windermere. I am sorry now I did not tell
my wife the whole thing at once.

Mrs. Erlynne. I regret my bad actions. You
regret ^{your} good ones—that is the difference between us.

Lord Windermere. I don't trust you. I *will* tell
my wife. It's better for her to know, and from me. It will
cause ^{her} infinite pain—it will humiliate her terribly, but
it's ^{right} that she should know.

Mrs. Erlynne. You propose to tell her?

Lord Windermere. I am going to tell her.

Mrs. Erlynne. [*Going up to him*] If you do, I will
make ^{my} name so infamous that it will mar every
moment ^{of} her life. It will ruin her, and make her wretched. If you
dare ^{to} tell her, there is no depth of degradation I will not
sink ^{to,} no pit of shame I will not enter. You shall not
tell her—I forbid **you**.